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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 1327
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 2027
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 001073

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. U.S.-Israel Relations
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Israel-South Africa Relations

Key stories in the media:

HaQaretz reported that a Qsenior AmericanQ conveyed a message to PM

Benjamin Netanyahu demanding that Israel not surprise the U.S. with an Israeli military operation against Iran. Israel Radio quoted a senior Israeli diplomatic source as saying that Israel acceded to the U.S. administration's demand. The radio reported that Netanyahu's emissaries -- Uzi Arad, Yitzhak Molcho, and Ron Dermer -- are preparing Netanyahu's trip to Washington. As a note of speculation, Israel Radio reported that two weeks ago CIA Director Leon Panetta visited Israel on behalf of President Obama. Leading media reported that yesterday members of Netanyahu's coalition urged him not to give in to pressure regarding the two-state solution during his visit to Washington.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted IAF commander Maj. Gen. Ido Nehushtan as saying yesterday that Israel has no answer to the rocket problem. He was quoted as saying that Syria is devoting most of its efforts to developing missiles. However, The Jerusalem Post quoted him as saying that the Iron Dome missile system, which is designed to intercept Qassam and Katyusha rockets from Gaza will be deployed in 2010.

The media reported that the trial of former president Moshe Katsav will open at Tel Aviv's District Court today. He is accused of rape and other sexual offences.

All media reported that yesterday Pope Benedict XVI branded the West Bank separation fence a symbol of "stalemate" between Israel and the Palestinians, urging both sides to break a "spiral of violence." The pope also called for "a sovereign Palestinian homeland." "Towering over us, as we gather here this afternoon, is a stark reminder of the stalemate that relations between Israelis and Palestinians seem to have reached -- the wall," he said, standing by the fence at a refugee camp in Bethlehem. He held a Mass in Nazareth this morning. Maariv reported that Interior Minister Eli Yishai has rejected on security grounds a Vatican request to issue entry visas to 500 priests from Arab countries. Maariv reported that the Pope and Netanyahu will discuss the issue today.

HaQaretz cited a forecast by the PA's Central Bureau of Statistics that within seven years the populations of Arabs and Jews between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea will be equivalent.

HaQaretz's Washington correspondent described the recruitment and training process of CIA agents, who she says are required to visit the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum before being assigned to positions overseas.

HaQaretz reported that Palestinian interest in the intentions of the new Israeli government tends to focus on one small area in the West Bank, Ma'aleh Adumim and its environs, particularly the area known as E1 linking the settlement to East Jerusalem. E1 is the only area that Benjamin Netanyahu explicitly committed to developing, on the eve of February's elections. His political rival, Labor Party chairman Ehud Barak, also publicly expressed support for building there. In an unrelated development, HaQaretz reported that yesterday the High Court of Justice issued an interim injunction asking the state to justify within 90 days why it does not evacuate the unauthorized West Bank outposts of Givat Assaf, MaQaleh Rehavam, Mitzpe Yitzhar, and Mitzpe Lakhish.

Israel Radio reported that yesterday the Security Council reviewed a UN report blaming Israel for attacks on the organization's buildings during the Gaza offensive, but went no further than expressing concern about its findings. The members of the council expressed their concern about the findings of the report. The Council has not brought to a vote a draft resolution by Libya, the Council's lone Arab member, which would condemn the Qdirect and intentional Israeli military strikes against United Nations premises."

HaQaretz reported that President Shimon Peres will meet with King Abdullah II in Jordan on Sunday to discuss the regional peace process. Peres is expected to stress the commitment of the Netanyahu government to the peace process and interest in holding negotiations with the Palestinians. HaQaretz quoted Foreign Ministry sources as saying that Peres was invited to take part in the Davos Forum in Jordan. Netanyahu was also reportedly invited, but he will not attend due to his trip to Washington, but he may visit Amman to visit the King.

Maariv reported that FM Avigdor Lieberman will make an official visit to Russia in early June. Leading media reported that yesterday Lieberman and British Foreign Secretary David Miliband issued a joint statement expressing deep concern about Iran's nuclear ambitions and its actions meant to destabilize the region.

The Jerusalem Post and other media quoted Nidal Kabalan, the newly appointed Syrian Ambassador to Ankara, as saying on Tuesday that Syria is reportedly ready to resume Turkish-mediated talks with Israel, despite Netanyahu's statements that he would not cede the Golan in a future peace agreement with Damascus.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Norwegian Ambassador to Israel Jakken Biorn Lian told the newspaper yesterday that the international community's major donors to the Palestinians are satisfied that mechanisms now exist to enable the flow of reconstruction funds into Gaza while bypassing Hamas.

Maariv quoted the Italian daily Corriere Della Sera that Italy has acceded to Israel's request that it help in thawing relations with Libya.

Major media reported that Israel has announced that it will open an embassy in Turkmenistan's capital of Ashgabat, located just 32 kilometers from the Iranian border.

HaQaretz reported that the naming of the square at the entrance to Jaffa for Yossi Carmel, the late military attache and one of the founders of Tel Aviv University, has angered local residents, who want the square be named in honor of the Nobel Peace Prize winners Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin. The square, to be dedicated tonight, abuts the well-known Jaffa clock tower. Residents say they want the landmark to bear a name that represents co-existence between Jews and Arabs. HaQaretz quoted Saliman Setel, leader of the southern branch of Israel's Islamic Movement in the city, as saying: "The [Tel Aviv-Jaffa] Municipality does all these things as if there were no Arabs living in Jaffa."

HaQaretz reported that a classified Iranian document regarding the allegations of spying against Iranian-American journalist Roxana Saberi cited five visits she made to Israel.

HaQaretz reported that on Sunday the America-Israel Cultural Foundation will resume distributing grants. It had lost most of its funds to Bernard Madoff's scheme.

HaQaretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that on Tuesday President Obama declared May Jewish-American Heritage Month, saying: "The United States would not be the country we know without the achievements of Jewish-Americans." He called on all Americans to "commemorate the proud heritage of Jewish-Americans with appropriate ceremonies and activities," noting that "unyielding in the face of hardship and tenacious in following their dreams, Jewish-Americans have surmounted the challenges that every immigrant group faces, and have made unparalleled contributions." He noted the contribution of American Jews to U.S. government at all branches, as well as to the U.S. Armed Forces.

1. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Liberal columnist Uzi Benziman wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "We can assume that Netanyahu will carry [the] weight [of his first term] with him when he leaves in a few days for a meeting with President Obama."

Political columnist Matti Tuchfeld wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: "A crisis with the United States may be caused as a result of stating half-truths and making promises that we do not plan to keep. Netanyahu, it is quite likely, will refrain from this."

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "I feel no inner conflict in rooting for Obama against Netanyahu, because I trust the U.S. administration's commitment to this country's well-being. Beyond trusting Obama, I

trust America.

Block Quotes:

I. "Washington Won't Buy It"

Liberal columnist Uzi Benziman wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (5/14): QOne of the main criticisms of Netanyahu's actions as prime minister in the years 1996-1999 was over his inability to maintain good relations with the U.S. administration.... We can assume that Netanyahu will carry this weight with him when he leaves in a few days for a meeting with President Obama.... Not only is Israel now facing a young, opinionated and innovative American administration, but Netanyahu's performance up until now, in his second term as prime minister, corroborates the diagnosis that this is the same Netanyahu from ten years ago. It is enough to observe the portfolio distribution in his government, the ideological contradiction embodied in the coalition's composition, the decision-making process on the state budget and his conduct toward his fellow ministers and toward top officials in order to be convinced that the frenzied days of 1996-1999 are on their way back. No polished speech or nicely phrased proverb will cover up for the internal turmoil.

II. QThey'll Agree Yet

Political columnist Matti Tuchfeld wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (5/14): QContrary to the common depictions of pressure and approaching conflict with the United States, U.S. President Barack Obama believes in the exact same method: to start from the grassroots. It is true that for Israelis it is unpleasant to hear of the dialogue that the United States plans to hold with Iran amid the latter's progress in attaining a nuclear weapon; but in fact, if one listens closely to Obama, another significant aspect is to be found: one cannot fail to notice that that the American president is unwilling to say how he sees the process with Iran coming to an end. And the same could be said about Cuba or North Korea.... Such is also the case with the supposed pressure. Obama is indeed attempting to promote a process at the end of which there will be two states for two peoples, but after his meeting with Netanyahu he will understand that this cannot practically be achieved without a process of peace building and the recognition of the Palestinians of Israel as a Jewish state.... A crisis with the United States may be caused as a result of stating half-truths and making promises that we do not plan to keep. Netanyahu, it is quite likely, will refrain from this.

III. QYes to Obama, No to Bibi

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (5/14): QWe all know what the two-state solution entails, and we all know that the Obama administration is in favor of it and the Netanyahu government is against it.... There is no peace camp left in this country, there is no opposition, there is no potential leader or alternative government that might reverse the nation's course. The only loyal opposition is Obama, and I stress the word QloyalQ.... This is why I feel no inner conflict in rooting for Obama against Netanyahu, because I trust the U.S. administration's commitment to this country's well-being. Beyond trusting Obama, I trust America. I may disagree with this or that U.S. policy, but I have total confidence that America wants Israel to thrive, that it will never deliberately sabotage this country's vital interests. I know it from history. Every single U.S. president from Harry Truman to George W. Bush has been a friend to Israel, in different ways, and I have no doubt that Obama will be one, too.

II. Mideast:

Summary:

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz: QA demographic majority is not enough to maintain Jewish sovereignty for the generations to come in Israel. Sovereignty also

depends on a geographic majority.

Block Quotes:

"Forever the Land Shall Not Be Sold"

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (5/14): QA demographic majority is not enough to maintain Jewish sovereignty for the generations to come in Israel. Sovereignty also depends on a geographic majority. The Basic Law on Israel Lands was passed to insure that this would be the case in the distant future, so Qownership shall not be transferredQ (from the state to individuals).... State lands, in addition to their intended purpose for housing, farming or public use, are the fundamental asset for promoting the Jewish people's national goals in its historic homeland. We must not have a policy of hiding our heads in the sand. The members of the Arab nation who live among us are trying to take over Israel Lands Administration property out of openly declared motives of nationalist interest, and in the Galilee and Negev they are succeeding. Now, with state lands to be offered to all comers -- foreigners, directly, or through Israeli straw companies -- will be able to institute a hostile takeover (money and motivation to act against Israel are not in short supply in the Arab oil countries) of a good part of Israel's land reserves that were intended for the generations to come. And the Jewish state -- how long will it last?

13. Israel-South Africa Relations:

Summary:

Senior foreign affairs commentator Adar Primor wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz: QIf the new Israeli administration continues to oppose the two-state solution, South Africa will have a pretext for downgrading relations.

Block Quotes:

"Zuma and the Original Sin"

Senior foreign affairs commentator Adar Primor wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (5/14): QIsrael is in large part still paying for its original sin -- forging comprehensive security ties with the Apartheid regime and Qselling its soul and morality to a racist, oppressive devil.Q In the words of former South African ambassador to Jerusalem Fumanekile Gqiba: QIsrael must refrain from putting a question mark in front of our relations with the Palestinians. It must remember that it was, in the past, of the same flesh as the apartheid regimeQ.... If the new Israeli administration continues to oppose the two-state solution, South Africa will have a pretext for downgrading relations. For [incoming South African President Jacob] Zuma, Benjamin Netanyahu's verbal contortions of Qeconomic peaceQ and Palestinian QautonomyQ simply will not suffice.

CUNNINGHAM